**Tarantella**

{tar-uhn-tel′-uh}

The tarantella is a rollicking Italian folk dance in 6/8 time in which a couple or several women teasingly pursue and court one another, twirling and capering with increasing speed to the music of a mandolin, guitar, castanets, or tambourine. Some authorities attribute its name to Taranto, the town of its supposed origin. Others refer to Tarantism, a form of hysteria that swept Italy in the 15th to 17th centuries and that allegedly was caused by the bite of a European wolf spider, *Lycosa tarentula.*It was claimed that only a certain frenzied dance would throw off the poison of the bite. Thus the dance's name, *tarentella,*may have come from the spider's common name, [tarantula](http://gme.grolier.com/article?assetid=0284300-0). The tarantella has often been used in ballet.

Newman, Barbara. "Tarantella." *Grolier Multimedia Encyclopedia.* Grolier Online, 2013. Web. 19 Dec. 2013.